



Research Projects

Research projects can be a highly adaptable and flexible way to help your students achieve your course goals and outcomes. Research projects inherently involve different stages and types of work and can provide students with opportunities to develop their search skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, project management skills, presentation skills, and more. Research projects can work in a wide range of class situations, from synchronous or asynchronous online classes to in-person classes.

Best Practices and Ideas

Chunk Your Assignment

This is a best practice in general but is particularly valuable if you are online. By chunking or breaking down a research assignment into smaller assignments (such as project proposals and annotated bibliographies), you gain a valuable opportunity to check-in with students and make sure their projects are on track. Undergraduates, particularly those who are newer to research, can really benefit from additional check-ins to ensure that their projects are progressing well.

Consider Component Parts

Research involves a number of complicated, interconnected, and recursive steps. Consider what students might need to know or be able to do before embarking on a research assignment and consider ways that students can practice certain skills with smaller assignments before diving into a larger project.

Consider Transferable Skills

Research projects are opportunities for students to not just learn more about a given field or discipline, but also a chance for them to develop really valuable, foundational skills in areas like critical thinking and communication. Consider what you want students to get out of a research assignment and how you can reflect on their own learning and skill-development as part of a research project.

Consider Creative Applications

Research does not always have to result in a research paper and, depending on your class topic and structure, your students might benefit from producing other types of content, from op-eds to video presentations to online exhibits.

Consider Multiple Deliverables

Research does not always have to result in a single end-product. If you have students write a research paper, consider having them also do a presentation or an infographic. Having students translate and transfer their research into different formats can help students develop their communication skills and can be a way to keep students engaged in a class.



Research project ideas

Everything But The Paper Assignment

This is an assignment where students go through the research process and produce annotated bibliographies, lit reviews, and/or project proposals. This type of assignment can help students develop their research skills without the added pressure of also writing a paper.

Information Literacy Skill Activities

Before diving into a research assignment, have students practice their skills with smaller assignments or class activities. You might have students practice evaluating sources, identifying peer review materials, or searching for information.

Translating a Research Paper Into Different Formats

Have students produce a podcast, presentation, website, online exhibit, infographic, etc.

Reflection Prompts and Discussion Boards

Have students reflect on the research process and/or share their thoughts and experiences on a discussion board. This can be a way to help students reflect on their own learning and engage with and learn from each other, particularly in online classes where students will have more limited, synchronous interactions both with you and also with each other.

Research for Problem Solving

Have students investigate a problem or a local issue and use their research to help them craft and propose some sort of action plan or solution to their issue.

Research for Civic Engagement

Have students research a local issue and policy issue and write a policy proposal or an op-ed on the issue. This type of assignment can help students not only explore different applications for research but also explore and reflect on their own views and ideas as engaged citizens.

Case Studies and Scenarios

Have students conduct research as part of a case study or scenario, such as a situation where they are having to work with a client or solve a complicated problem in their field or discipline. This type of research project can work really well as a group project.



Group Research Projects

Consider turning any of the above ideas into a group research project, where students will have multiple phases and different types of content that they are responsible for producing together.

Surveys, Polls, and Studies

Have students, ideally in groups, work together to develop their own survey, analyze, and report on their results.